# 4

## The Gamble of Democracy
*The Popularity of Political Islam and What it Means for Middle Eastern Women*

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As noted historian Eugene Rogan wrote in *The Arabs: A History*, "it is easy to forget just how secular the Middle East was in 1981."[1] This is significant because, if one follows the commentary about the Middle East found in most mainstream news sources, one might assume that the non-secular political ideology known as Islamism will become the governing ideology of most Middle Eastern states. Saliently, that commentary also often posits that Islamism virtually guarantees the oppression and unequal treatment of women. However, a longer and more nuanced view of the history of the Middle East contradicts these sentiments. As Rogan notes, Islamic societies do not always give rise to Islamism as we know it and, while most religions have a complicated relationship with gender equality, until modern times Islamic polities have generally been quite tolerant and progressive when it comes to the protection of women's rights. Even in the recent past numerous Middle Eastern states have made tangible progress regarding the rights of women. In Turkey, as the new republic rose from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire in1924, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) codified in the Turkish constitution a woman's right to vote and hold political office. Tansu Çiller served as the first female Prime Minister of Turkey from 1993 to 1996, and women have served in the Grand National Assembly since 1937.[2] In Iran, women received the right to compulsory education and to vote as a part of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's White Revolution during the 1960s and 1970s. In Egypt, women received the right to vote, and were explicitly granted equality of opportunity, by Gamal Abdul Nasser's 1956 Constitution.[3] The Egypt of the twentieth century allowed, even if it did not always completely support, robust feminist movements like the Egyptian Feminist Union and the Egyptian Women's Writers Association.[4] While these examples of progress might seem minimal from a twenty-first century perspective, to most Western observers they were examples of positive change. They continue to remind us that women's rights and majority Muslim societies do not inherently oppose one another.

However, the leaders of Pahlavi Iran, Turkey before 2002, and pre-2011 Egypt were not democratically elected. Indeed, they were often autocrats supported by the United States. Atatürk, a professed republican, was in practice quite authoritarian, presiding over a one-party government.[5] After his death in 1938, the military's commitment to Kemalism led them to overthrow the elected government whenever it appeared as though Islam was becoming too strong of an influence in Turkish life and politics.[6] Arguably, the first truly free election was in 2002 when the Justice and Development Party (AKP), a moderate Islamist party, won. Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, while committed to Western style reform, was a heavy-handed monarch known to imprison or execute those who challenged him politically.[7] Finally, in Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar el-Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak were presidents in name only for the fifty-nine years that they collectively governed Egypt, with little tolerance for dissent, and a willingness to imprison, exile, or kill political opponents.
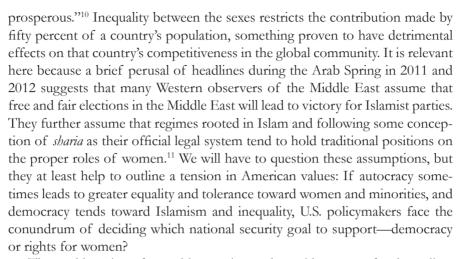
Analysts of U.S. foreign policy have debated for decades (at least) whether the United States should, under certain conditions, ally with states antithetical to its liberal democratic values. In many cases they determined that the stability of authoritarian government was the best choice for U.S. interests. This, of course, begs the question: if alliance, formal or informal, with an autocrat provides some tangible benefit to American national interests, and if the alternative to autocracy is anarchy, should the United States chose the side of interest and stability over democracy? Furthermore, what if democratic elections themselves threaten to place illiberal leaders in power? Not every *demos*, after all, should be assumed to be pro-American, or even pro-democracy.[8]

This chapter will consider one form that this broad concern can assume: Does progress toward equality for women and minority groups achieved by non-democratic governmental decree at least partially justify U.S. support for authoritarian regimes? Starkly stated, in cases where democratically-elected governments seem likely to oppose gender equality, should the United States support the elected government or the "safer," autocratic alternative?

Considering that the United States has supported governments of all types that trampled on all sorts of human rights, why is the relationship between gender equality and U.S. support for autocratic regimes important enough to debate here? To begin with, furthering gender equality is a stated goal of the U.S. National Security Strategy under President Obama, and it was specifically stated as a goal of the United States in his 2009 speech to the Muslim world in Cairo.[9] Further, as President Obama mentions in that speech, "it is no coincidence that countries where women are well educated are far more likely to be

prosperous."[10] Inequality between the sexes restricts the contribution made by fifty percent of a country's population, something proven to have detrimental effects on that country's competitiveness in the global community. It is relevant here because a brief perusal of headlines during the Arab Spring in 2011 and 2012 suggests that many Western observers of the Middle East assume that free and fair elections in the Middle East will lead to victory for Islamist parties. They further assume that regimes rooted in Islam and following some conception of *sharia* as their official legal system tend to hold traditional positions on the proper roles of women.[11] We will have to question these assumptions, but they at least help to outline a tension in American values: If autocracy sometimes leads to greater equality and tolerance toward women and minorities, and democracy tends toward Islamism and inequality, U.S. policymakers face the conundrum of deciding which national security goal to support—democracy or rights for women?
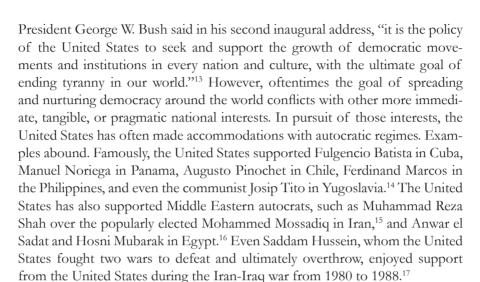
The goal here is to frame this question and provide context for the policymaker considering how the United States should respond to it. We will begin by acknowledging the times when the United States has condoned or enabled autocracy for the purpose of pragmatic or humanitarian interests, despite its longstanding commitment to spreading and protecting democracy. We will then focus on women's rights in the Middle East, using the case studies of Turkey and Egypt to illuminate how democracy might empower Islamism and have implications for women. Finally, it is relevant to weigh the options going forward. Most Westerners believe that democracy is good, but democracy can also be difficult to establish and unpredictable in its effects. Many international critics of U.S. foreign policy cite the hypocrisy of supporting democracy only when it clearly benefits the United States. There is evidence that this perceived disingenuousness of U.S. foreign policy contributes to anti-American sentiment worldwide and serves as a source of instability in its own right.

## I.   Make the World Safe for Democracy

Policymakers in the United States and other Western nations must make sense of this contradiction. At least rhetorically, the United States has promoted democracy as one of its fundamental foreign policy goals since at least the early twentieth century. In his 1917 address to Congress asking for permission to enter WWI, Woodrow Wilson said the now famous words: "The world must be made safe for democracy."[12] After WWII, one of the fundamental goals of the Truman and Eisenhower doctrines was to spread democracy, and

President George W. Bush said in his second inaugural address, "it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."[13] However, oftentimes the goal of spreading and nurturing democracy around the world conflicts with other more immediate, tangible, or pragmatic national interests. In pursuit of those interests, the United States has often made accommodations with autocratic regimes. Examples abound. Famously, the United States supported Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, Manuel Noriega in Panama, Augusto Pinochet in Chile, Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, and even the communist Josip Tito in Yugoslavia.[14] The United States has also supported Middle Eastern autocrats, such as Muhammad Reza Shah over the popularly elected Mohammed Mossadiq in Iran,[15] and Anwar el Sadat and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.[16] Even Saddam Hussein, whom the United States fought two wars to defeat and ultimately overthrow, enjoyed support from the United States during the Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988.[17]
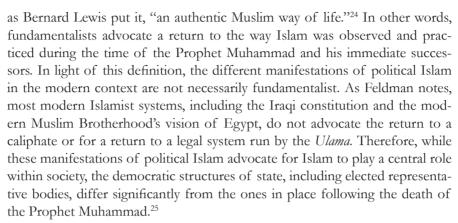
As the twentieth century ended, a new threat emerged in the eyes of many policymakers and pundits in the West in the form of Islamism and Islamic fundamentalism. These two terms are not interchangeable, but many Western policymakers subsumed both ideologies under a broader banner of "radical Islam" and determined that it was antithetical to American national interests, including the interest in promoting women's rights.[18] This belief led many observers the United States to be wary of supporting Middle Eastern democracy.[19]

Arguably, these policymakers failed to distinguish adequately between moderate and radical forms of Islamism. It will be worthwhile to establish some working definitions of Islamism and Islamic fundamentalism. Noah Feldman argues that "Islamism" is nothing more or less than political Islam. In practice, to say that a state is "Islamist" means simply that it "is governed through Islamic law and Islamic values."[20] Evidence of Islamism, then, could be as straightforward as a statement in the constitution that acknowledges *sharia* law as the moral and ethical basis for its legal system (as does the Iraqi constitution).[21] Other evidence might appear in democratically elected governments being directed by a constitution to "draft and pass laws that incorporate the content of Islamic law."[22] The Muslim Brotherhood proposed something like this system of government in Egypt. Islamism can also mean, as it does in Iran, that the state is a theocracy in which religious scholars, the *ulema*, have the final say over legislative actions taken by parliament (the *Majlis*) or the president.[23]

Feldman refers to these states above as Islamic states, but refutes that they are fundamentalist. Islamic fundamentalist movements advocate for a return to,

as Bernard Lewis put it, "an authentic Muslim way of life."[24] In other words, fundamentalists advocate a return to the way Islam was observed and practiced during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors. In light of this definition, the different manifestations of political Islam in the modern context are not necessarily fundamentalist. As Feldman notes, most modern Islamist systems, including the Iraqi constitution and the modern Muslim Brotherhood's vision of Egypt, do not advocate the return to a caliphate or for a return to a legal system run by the *Ulama*. Therefore, while these manifestations of political Islam advocate for Islam to play a central role within society, the democratic structures of state, including elected representative bodies, differ significantly from the ones in place following the death of the Prophet Muhammad.[25]

Clarifying the distinction between fundamentalism and Islamism is important because confusion regarding these terms often colors the debate in the United States over democracy in the Middle East. It is true, of course, that fundamentalist and even radical voices exist within most Islamist societies.[26] However, as Anders Strindberg and Mats Wärn wrote, "not all Muslims are religious, not all religious Muslims are Islamists, not all Islamists are militant, and not all militant Islamists are violent."[27] Americans would do well to remember that there are traditionalist, fundamentalist, radical, and dangerous segments in almost every society—including most Western democracies. Therefore, a more nuanced understanding of Islamism is critical because conflating Islamism, Islamic fundamentalism, and radical Islam affects U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East and contributes to angst regarding democracy. With the frequency that these terms are misused or conflated, it seems clear that the confusion at least contributes to the argument by non-scholarly observers that Western powers should support he stability of anti-Islamist autocracies at the expense of democracy. This becomes increasingly relevant from a pragmatic policy perspective because some scholars suggest that U.S. support of autocratic regimes to stem the rise of "radical" Islam has served to increase radicalism and anti-U.S. sentiment.[28]

The concern of Western policymakers with the rise of radical Islam was not entirely unfounded. Many aspects of the theocracy established in Iran after the 1979 revolution troubled Western observers, including the trampling of human rights and the rolling back of many rights for women. However, as the popularity of Islam surged in the region, the U.S. feared a repeat of the Iranian Revolution and a loss of long-term allies. Policy experts in the United States during the 1980s and 90s became increasingly concerned with the expansion of

political Islam in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, and the rise of Salafism across the Middle East at the end of the twentieth century.[29] This concern solidified U.S. support of autocratic regimes. In 2011, as demonstrators in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt demanded the resignation and imprisonment of Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president reminded U.S. policymakers that he was all that stood in the way of radical Islamists; many Americans were ready to believe him.[30] In the case of Syria, many U.S. officials cautioned against supporting anti-Assad rebels because they feared radical Islamist groups such as the Al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front (*Jabat al-Nusra*) would seize control of the revolution and establish a repressive Islamic state.[31] These fears have informed U.S. foreign policy and have led to ambivalent U.S. support during the Arab Spring.[32] But if the perception of U.S. opposition to Islamism increases its radicalism, the United States may simply be planting the seeds for a worse and truly radical form of Islamism in the future.

Further, there are tangible consequences for supporting autocratic regimes. Among the many causes of anti-American sentiment in the Middle East in the years leading up to 9/11 and since, was the knowledge among Middle Eastern populations that the United States professed support for democracy but supported the autocratic regimes that subjugated them.[33] This was especially damaging to the credibility of the United States among the moderates and middle classes where secularism and liberalism live. This is in line with Shadi Hamid's argument regarding the tyranny-terror link.[34]

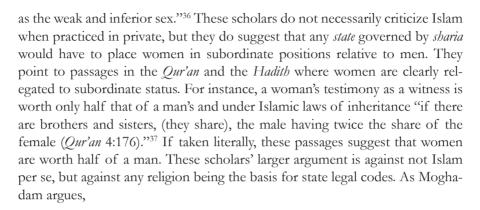## II.    Islamism: Threat to Liberalism or Necessary Stage of Democracy?

Let us now consider women's rights specifically. Among the most fiercely debated topics in scholarship on the Middle East and Islam is the question of the role of women within Islamic societies. As John Esposito argues in his introduction to *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*, "in no area was the force of tradition felt more strongly and the clash of civilizations more apparent than that of the status and roles of women."[35] Can an Islamist state allow for equality and still be in accordance with its Islamic foundations?

### *The Debate on Women and Islam*
Many argue that it cannot. In *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, Valerie Moghadam notes that a number of well-known scholars hold that "Islam is incompatible with feminism—even with the more mainstream/modernist notion of women's rights—because Islam regards women

as the weak and inferior sex."[36] These scholars do not necessarily criticize Islam when practiced in private, but they do suggest that any *state* governed by *sharia* would have to place women in subordinate positions relative to men. They point to passages in the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* where women are clearly relegated to subordinate status. For instance, a woman's testimony as a witness is worth only half that of a man's and under Islamic laws of inheritance "if there are brothers and sisters, (they share), the male having twice the share of the female (*Qur'an* 4:176)."[37] If taken literally, these passages suggest that women are worth half of a man. These scholars' larger argument is against not Islam per se, but against any religion being the basis for state legal codes. As Moghadam argues,

> Islam is neither more nor less patriarchal than other major religions, especially Hinduism and the other two Abrahamic religions, Judaism and Christianity…[t]he gender configurations that draw heavily from religion and cultural norms to govern women's work, political praxis, family status, and other aspects of their lives in the Middle East are not unique to Muslim or Middle Eastern countries.[38]

For these scholars, then, the only way to achieve equality for women is a secular society free from the influences of Islam, or of religion in general.[39] If these scholars are correct, then if an election brings an Islamist government to power, progress toward equality for women becomes more difficult because, as Egyptian women's rights activist Dalia Ziada succinctly observed regarding her activism, "under Mubarak, we were trying to challenge [the existing patriarchal] mentality from a civil perspective, which allows dissent. But now it will be different. Because if you try to challenge the same political mentality, but covered with Islamism—you'll be challenging God. So it's much more difficult."[40]

For other scholars, gender equality under an Islamic state is possible. Yvonne Haddad highlights two distinct strains of thought among this group. One group, which she labels modernist, seeks to modernize Islam.[41] Prominent proponents of this idea believe that Islam is open to interpretation or *ijtihad*. They see the reform of Islamic ideas regarding women as a continuation of the work done by Jamal al-Din al Afghani and Muhammad Abdu in the late nineteenth century. For these scholars, Islam has been constantly reinterpreted since the death of Muhammad (despite what traditionalists believe), and there is no reason why this ongoing reinterpretation could not allow for equality between women and men. Women can be equal within an Islamic system, they suggest, because the proper interpretation of *sharia* values equality and justice.[42] In other

words the Quran, like all the holy books, needs to be put into historical context. In early Islamic periods, men were responsible for taking care of the women and children, yet women were allowed to keep any money they had and did not need to use it for family obligations. As such, many Islamic feminists argue that it was not because women were worth less than men that they received a lower inheritance, but because they had fewer obligations with regard to support.[43] If this is true, then this more modernist interpretation would suggest that because many women work today, these laws need to be adapted. As Ann Elizabeth Mayer points out, experts in Islamic law testified to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that "the *shari'a* itself gave equality to women; the problem that had to be overcome was that of interpretation. Religions should evolve over time, but the interpretation of the *shari'a* had come to a standstill centuries ago."[44]

Haddad also describes a second group of scholars, representing the Islamist strain, who want to "Islamize modernity."[45] Islamists consider women to have a very important role in society, one crucial to the success of an Islamist government, but they think women should contribute as leaders of households and partners of their husbands.[46] Many of these Islamists consider themselves feminists;[47] they believe that Islam, while delineating a division of labor, protects women and places them in a position of privilege.[48] It argues that the *sharia* ensures equality because of the so-called "complementarity" of the sexes.[49] The privileged role for women as mothers and wives is in fact equal in importance to the roles men play. Further, to oppose women's proper role harms society and women. "While Western feminists seek to abolish division of labor based on gender," Haddad writes, "Islamists see such division as safeguarding woman's interests and not taxing her abilities;" women are partners in "a family structure predicated by divine design as the paradigmatic social unit."[50]

Although Haddad's analysis of the debate over women and Islam is helpful, we should keep in mind that her two-fold distinction is not exhaustive. Middle Eastern women are active in their own lives and are not monolithic (or binary) in their preferences. As Moghadam writes:

> Some women activists align themselves with liberal, social democratic, or communist organizations; others support Islamist/fundamentalist groups. Some women reject religion as patriarchal; others wish to reclaim religion for themselves or to identify feminine aspects of it. Some women reject traditions and time-honored customs; others find identity, solace, and strength in them.[51]

Many Middle Eastern women are feminist in the Western sense; many support the varied and complex manifestations of an Islamic state. Many fall somewhere between these two positions, and many are unconcerned to take a position one way or another. There is as at least as much diversity of opinion and belief among Middle Eastern women as among Western women, and we should be cautious lest we paint with too broad a brush.

## III.   Case Studies

*Turkey*

To properly debate whether democracy is a threat to women's rights in a Middle Eastern context, we need now to examine how popularly elected Islamist governments have affected women's rights. The examples of Turkey and Egypt serve the purpose. The evidence is less ominous than the headlines might have us believe.

Turkey is, perhaps, the most useful case to consider, because the AKP has now been the dominant political party for more than a decade and, unlike the brief government of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, it is attempting to operate within the avowedly secular constitution.[52] When a political party espouses a central role for religion in the lives of its people, but has a clearly secular constitution, does it govern according to Islamist or secular principles? At least thus far, the results in Turkey are encouraging for secularists. Rhetorically, Turkish President Recip Tayyip Erdoğan has championed an Islamist perspective regarding women that we have highlighted above. According to Erdoğan,

> [Islam] has defined a position for women: motherhood…their characters, habits and physiques are different…you cannot place a mother breastfeeding her baby on an equal footing with men…you cannot make women work the same jobs as men do…this is against their delicate nature.[53]

Despite remarks like these, Turkey's secular constitution remains and Erdoğan's policies are opposed by many in Turkey.[54] Still, some fear that Erdogan wants to revise Turkey's constitution to reflect more Islamist values in what they describe as a constitutional coup.[55] However, Erdoğan would have to win enough seats in the Turkish parliament to change the constitution and transform the secular underpinnings of the state. In the short term, at least, this seems unlikely considering that the AKP party received a stunning rebuke in the June 2015 Parliamentary election, an election with high turnout and verifiably fair results.[56] Erdoğan remains in office as the President, but the AKP lost its major-

ity in Parliament and was unable to create a ruling coalition. This lead Erdoğan to call for another round of elections in November 2015 and, while those elections saw the AKP regain its majority, it still fell fourteen parliamentary seats short of a majority large enough to renegotiate the Turkish constitution.[57]

In this case, at least for now, democracy has worked with Islamism. The overwhelming majority of Turks are Muslim, and believe Islam should have a role in their lives. However, because of the secular constitution and the representative political structure, the AKP has thus far been unable to impose *sharia* law or to make any significant headway in reversing the progress Turkish women have made over the past century. In fact, because of the influence of women in society, the continued influence of Kemalists, and international pressure, some of the remaining hindrances to women's equality were removed, even with the AKP in power. For example, in 2005 the penal code was changed to make sexual crimes against women crimes against the victims rather than crimes against public morality and order.[58]
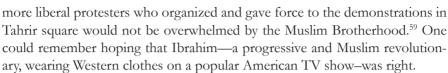
Despite the advantages that women have in Turkey, they have not achieved full equality. Nevertheless, one might point to Turkey as an example of a country where Islamists have worked within the framework of a secular state with significant protections for women's equality. While Islam has become an increasingly important part of Turkish political life after 2002, the Turkish constitution remains relatively true to its secular Kemalist roots while at the same time moving past the undemocratic influence of the military. The Turkish case is in some ways exceptional, however; Islamist groups that seek to govern elsewhere will not have to overcome a long-entrenched secular constitution.

## *Egypt*

Western observers watched Egypt's 2011 revolution and its aftermath with excitement and hope—and, ultimately, with great disappointment. After nearly sixty years of authoritarian rule, Egyptians had overthrown Hosni Mubarak and seemed poised, for the first time in their history, to experience true, fully inclusive, democracy. It was a point of great pride for the Egyptians that they had overthrown tyranny on their own, using only social media and word of mouth, even in the face of significant Western skepticism. Almost immediately after the revolution, Western policymakers started to worry that the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood would win the first fair elections. Liberal Egyptians remained hopeful. Islamists would not, they insisted, "hijack" the revolution. Activist Gihan (Gigi) Ibrahim, one of the youthful, tech savvy, faces of the revolution adamantly argued to John Stewart in April of 2011 that she and the

more liberal protesters who organized and gave force to the demonstrations in Tahrir square would not be overwhelmed by the Muslim Brotherhood.[59] One could remember hoping that Ibrahim—a progressive and Muslim revolutionary, wearing Western clothes on a popular American TV show–was right.
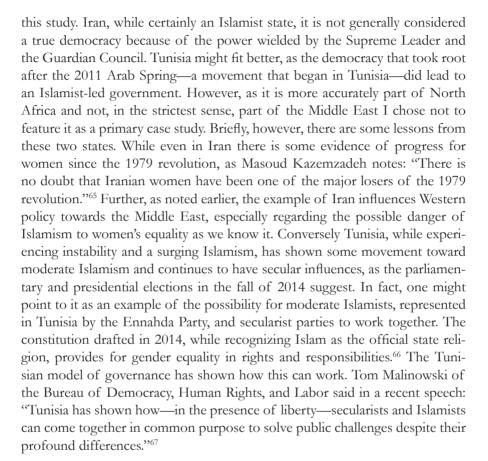
But she was at least partially wrong. Evidence to support those skeptics who claimed that democratic processes in the Middle East would be used to bring illiberal regimes to power was mounting. The 2011 election for the Egyptian parliament, gave the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party forty-three percent of the vote in the People's Assembly (216 of 498 votes, 108 more than the next party), which was enough to create a dominant ruling coalition, and Muhammad Morsi soon became the first popularly elected president in Egyptian history by wining fifty-one percent of the vote in a runoff election.[60] Upon taking office, Morsi affirmed a commitment to protect the rights of women to U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton.[61] However, he then embarked on a program intended to Islamize the Egyptian government. Ibrahim was proven partially right, insofar as the actions of the Muslim Brotherhood were the result of democratic elections. The revolution was not hijacked. The political party with the best organization at the time of the revolution won the election fairly, owing partly to the fragmentation of its opposition. But the best organized political party was hardly the one that Ibrahim and likeminded liberals had hoped would rule Egypt.

What happened next is of great relevance to the debate we have described above. In July 2013, Mohammed Morsi was overthrown by the Egyptian military with the support of the Muslim Brotherhood's political opponents. Millions had poured out into the streets opposing President Morsi's increase in executive power and, instead of waiting for the next election cycle to oppose Morsi, the military reenacted a scene familiar to students of Egyptian history by leading a coup d'état under the leadership of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.[62] Had the military acted prematurely, precluding the development in Egypt of a regime more similar to the "Turkey model?" Opponents of Morsi's regime had legitimate concerns that the president's policies would entrench Islam in the Egyptian constitution, and that Morsi was using presidential decrees to consolidate executive power.[63] Perhaps Morsi's new powers and constitutional reforms would have proven detrimental to women and Christians, infringed on personal liberties, and given Muslim scholars increased influence in the legislative process.[64] The military's actions prevent us from knowing for sure.

Finally, before concluding, Iran and Tunisia are two other examples of Islamist states that might be relevant to the discussion but were left out of
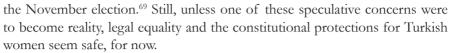
this study. Iran, while certainly an Islamist state, it is not generally considered a true democracy because of the power wielded by the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council. Tunisia might fit better, as the democracy that took root after the 2011 Arab Spring—a movement that began in Tunisia—did lead to an Islamist-led government. However, as it is more accurately part of North Africa and not, in the strictest sense, part of the Middle East I chose not to feature it as a primary case study. Briefly, however, there are some lessons from these two states. While even in Iran there is some evidence of progress for women since the 1979 revolution, as Masoud Kazemzadeh notes: "There is no doubt that Iranian women have been one of the major losers of the 1979 revolution."[65] Further, as noted earlier, the example of Iran influences Western policy towards the Middle East, especially regarding the possible danger of Islamism to women's equality as we know it. Conversely Tunisia, while experiencing instability and a surging Islamism, has shown some movement toward moderate Islamism and continues to have secular influences, as the parliamentary and presidential elections in the fall of 2014 suggest. In fact, one might point to it as an example of the possibility for moderate Islamists, represented in Tunisia by the Ennahda Party, and secularist parties to work together. The constitution drafted in 2014, while recognizing Islam as the official state religion, provides for gender equality in rights and responsibilities.[66] The Tunisian model of governance has shown how this can work. Tom Malinowski of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor said in a recent speech: "Tunisia has shown how—in the presence of liberty—secularists and Islamists can come together in common purpose to solve public challenges despite their profound differences."[67]

## IV.    Conclusions and the Future

It is never certain how politics will play out. It is certainly possible that President Erdoğan and the AKP will eventually achieve a super majority in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, allowing him to change the constitution. Further, there is growing concern among secular Turks—especially many women—that even without the ability to change the constitution Erdoğan will threaten women's rights as he attempts to assert ever greater influence over Turkish politics through extralegal means.[68] Political scientist Pinar Tremblay noted that the position of women in Turkey is already more precarious as a result of the November election, pointing out that the number of female parliamentarians fell from eighteen percent in the June election to just under fifteen percent in

the November election.[69] Still, unless one of these speculative concerns were to become reality, legal equality and the constitutional protections for Turkish women seem safe, for now.

Egypt faces different challenges. President Morsi and his party were ousted by the military. The subsequent election of el-Sisi was far from free, open, and fair.[70] Democracy in Egypt is precarious. By some estimates, the el-Sisi government has imprisoned as many as 40,000 people, prevented demonstrations against the government, and severely oppressed the political opposition.[71] It is possible that el-Sisi will more openly welcome opposition and empower Egyptians in their next election, but the history of military rule in Egypt would suggest otherwise.

Should the United States continue to provide billions of dollars of aid to Egypt?[72] If the protection of women's rights is as central to America's interests in the Middle East as president Obama's 2009 "New Beginnings" speech suggests, it is possible to argue that women's rights were threatened by Muslim Brotherhood rule, and that protections for women's rights have expanded since the election of el-Sisi and the establishment of the 2014 constitution.[73] Still, we should wonder whether repressing Islamist impulses in Egypt, and continuing U.S. support for another Middle Eastern autocracy, will radicalize Islamists in the future, causing even greater instability and loss of rights for women. As Islam is redefined and reinterpreted, more Muslims may come to believe that women are the equals of men. U.S. policymakers should not assume that any inclusion of Islam in a government's political system will inevitably lead to the marginalization of women. The repression of Islam, if the United States is seen as complicit, could lead to increased anti-U.S. sentiment and anger.

How patient should those who believe in democracy be? As Feldman argues, "[i]f the Islamists cannot deliver political justice, they will find themselves discredited like their predecessors."[74] In Egypt we may never know if the Muslim Brotherhood would have discredited themselves. But there is evidently a desire for democracy in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East. Further, if you believe in the core assumption of the modernization theories espoused by scholars such as Fareed Zakaria, Christian Haerpfer, Ronald Inglehart, and Christian Wezel, then if a democracy is given enough time, and enough support to develop modern institutions, a liberal democracy that recognizes gender equality will result. Therefore, in the long view, maybe the United States and its Western allies should have more patience. In this light, the words of Dalia Ziada regarding Egyptians' election of Morsi are as pertinent now as when she spoke them:

> I do think electing a representative of the Muslim Brotherhood [was] a big mistake. But we should accept it, learn from it, so in the future we will be more cautious. It is a privilege to be able to choose who will represent you, who will be your president. And, I think, the best thing about democracy is that it fixes itself. I'm discouraged, yes, but I'm hopeful.[75]

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NOTES

[1]Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 399.

[2]Carter Vaugh Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 252–3. Atatürk's record regarding women's rights is complicated by his own relationships with women. Still, on February 17, 1926, Turkey adopted a new civil code by which the rights of Turkish women and men were declared equal except in suffrage. After a short but intense struggle, Turkish women achieved voting rights in local elections by Act no. 1580 on April 3, 1930, and received the right to stand for office in 1934.

[3]Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 218–19. Nasser also disbanded the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU), but this was a part of his broader crack down on political life in Egypt not an attack on the EFU.

[4]Egypt has a long and impressive list of feminist leaders going back to the 1920s, and it includes famous feminist leaders like Huda Sha'arawi and Nawal el Saadawi. For a wonderful examination of the women's movements and leaders of Egypt, see Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation.*
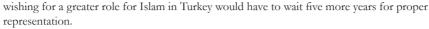
[5]William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 5th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 166–7.

[6]Ibid., 489. The Turkish military overthrew the elected government three times between 1960 and 1980 and, while not technically a coup d' état, the military intervened again in 1997 when it sent a memorandum to the government of Necmettin Erbaken threatening another coup if their demands for a return to secularism were not met. As a result, Erbaken resigned and those

wishing for a greater role for Islam in Turkey would have to wait five more years for proper representation.

[7]Ibid., 275–6.

[8]There is an important distinction here between simple electoral democracy, which does not guarantee equality or the protection of civil rights, and liberal democracy that does. The fear among many in the west, justifiably so, is that the former does not necessarily lead to the latter. Therefore, the choice for U.S. foreign policy makers is often to decide whether to accept an electoral outcome even if it does not support the liberal goals of the United States. For an explanation of illiberal democracy see Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (1997): 22–43.

[9]Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama on a New Beginning," in *The New Arab Revolt, What Happened, What it Means, and What Comes Next* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 395–6; Barack Obama, *2015 National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), ii, 10, 18–20, https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_ security_ strategy.pdf. The goal of furthering equality for women and girls is stated as a goal five times in the *2015 National Security Strategy*. Specifically, under the section entitled "Advance Equality" the document states: "Recognizing that no society will succeed if it does not draw on the potential of all its people, we are pressing for the political and economic participation of women and girls."

[10]Obama, "Remarks by President Obama on a New Beginning," 395.

[11]Valentine Moghadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 5. While overly simplified, the traditional roles for Muslim women place them in the so-called "private sphere" of life where they have a privileged and sacred position as wives and mothers. This is not unique to Islam as variations on these same traditionalist ideas are found the world over. For a complete examination of gender roles in Muslim societies see Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

[12]Woodrow Wilson, "President Woodrow Wilson's War Message, 1917," in *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations Volume II: Since 1914*, 5th ed., eds. D. Merrill and T. G. Patterson (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 39–40.

[13]George W. Bush, "Inaugural Address by George W. Bush, 2005," January 20, 2005, www.inaugural.senate.gov/swearing-in/address/address-by-george-w-bush-2005.

[14]J. Garry Clifford, Kenneth J. Hagan, and Thomas G. Patterson, *American Foreign Relations: A History Since 1895*, vol. 2 (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 284.
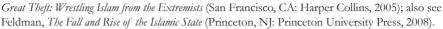
[15]Ibid., 407.

[16]Anwar el-Sadat was the first Arab leader to sign a peace treaty with Israel and recognize its sovereignty in 1979, an act for which he was awarded not only the Nobel Peace Prize but also a significant increase in aid and foreign investment from the United States. Mubarak, for his own pragmatic reasons, maintained this tenuous peace, received significant subsidies from the United States, and was a supporter of U.S. interests in the Middle East. Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From Nasser to Mubarak* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 177–8.

[17]Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 239–40.

[18]Supporting the rights of women is certainly a stated goal of the United States, as Barack Obama's speech to the Muslim world from Cairo in 2008 proves. The flawed belief among many media pundits, policymakers, and scholars, that any Islamic polity is inherently antagonistic to democracy and human rights is challenged well by Khaled Abu el Fadl, *The*

*Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 2005); also see Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[19]The examples of this run the gamut from the rhetoric of pundits and talking heads to official U.S. policy. Unofficially, look at the news coverage of the Arab spring. There was no shortage of commentary that argued against democracy in the Middle East because it would likely lead to Islamist victory. Shadi Hamid, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, shows this reticence going as far back as the 1992 acceptance by the U.S. of a military coup to prevent the legitimate election of the Islamist Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria. He then highlights several examples since the Arab Spring where U.S. inaction, partially due to fear of Islamism and instability, contributed to the continued existence of illiberal and autocratic regimes in Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. See Shadi Hamid, "Islamism, the Arab Spring, and the Failure of America's Do Nothing Policy," *The Atlantic* (October 9, 2015), http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/middle-east-egypt-us-policy/409537/.

[20]Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State*, 111.

[21]Ibid., 11. The exact text of the Iraqi constitution recognizes Islam as the official religion of the state and "the fundamental source of legislation." In practice, while this makes Islam the basis for legislation, the body of legislators who actually make laws are not, as Feldman notes, members of the *Ulama*. Further, there is no requirement that the judges in modern Islamist states like Iraq have to be religious scholars. Therefore, while they are expected to use Islam as a source for legislation, legislators and judges could interpret Islamic guidance in very open, or closed, ways.

[22]Ibid., 119. A key point Feldman makes is that Islamists who follow the Muslim Brotherhood's model have a complicated relationship with *sharia*. Islamic law is traditionally the domain of the religious scholars, but modern Islamism does not recognize the preeminence of the scholars. As such, *sharia* is based more on justice than on traditional interpretation of Islamic law and is therefore more flexible and amenable to democratic governance.

[23]Ibid., 134–7. It is also important to note that the term "fundamentalist" was originally used to describe certain protestant churches of the early twentieth century that clung to literal interpretations of the Bible. While Muslim and Christian fundamentalists differ in many ways, it is important to note that Islam is not the only religion where some adherents zealously look to recapture a pure or ideal past. Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 117–18, n. 3.

[24]Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 24.

[25]Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State*, 135–6. The closest example of a state where true fundamentalism is the ideology of the state is Saudi Arabia where the puritanical interpretation of Islamic law known as Wahhabism forms the foundation of Saudi life and law.
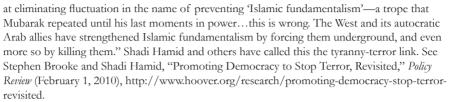
[26]Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam,* 24. It is important to understand that there are radical Christians in most Western countries as well. As Lewis points out, the term fundamentalism was adapted from a term used to describe Protestant Christian groups.

[27]Anders Strindberg and Mats Wärn, *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization, and Resistance* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), 182.

[28]Nassim Nicholas Taleb and Mark Blyth, "The Black Swan of Cairo: How Suppressing Volatility Makes the World Less Predictable and More Dangerous," *The New Arab Revolt* (New York: The Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 159. According to Taleb and Blyth, "[p]olicymakers in the United Kingdom and the United States have long promoted policies aimed

at eliminating fluctuation in the name of preventing 'Islamic fundamentalism'—a trope that Mubarak repeated until his last moments in power…this is wrong. The West and its autocratic Arab allies have strengthened Islamic fundamentalism by forcing them underground, and even more so by killing them." Shadi Hamid and others have called this the tyranny-terror link. See Stephen Brooke and Shadi Hamid, "Promoting Democracy to Stop Terror, Revisited," *Policy Review* (February 1, 2010), http://www.hoover.org/research/promoting-democracy-stop-terror-revisited.

[29]Taleb and Blyth, "The Black Swan of Cairo," 151. According to the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Salafism is "a neo-orthodox brand of Islamic reformism, originating in the late 19th century and centered on Egypt, aiming to regenerate Islam by a return to the tradition represented by the 'pious forefathers' (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, hence its name) of the Primitive Faith." See P. Shinar and W. Ende, s.v. "Salafiyya," *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al., Brill Online, 2015, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/salafiyya-COM_0982. In other words, Salafism is a fundamentalist movement. It is particularly frightening to many in the West because it is often conflated with the other well-known fundamentalist movement known as Wahhabism. While these movements do have some congruence, and also have some of the same influences, they are not identical. The best examination of Salafist intellectual influences, including Muhammad Abduh, Jamal al-din al-Afghani and Rashid Rida, as well as why it is overly simple to just label them "fundamentalist," is found in Albert Hourani's masterful work *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1935*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[30]Taleb and Blyth, "The Black Swan of Cairo," 159.

[31]Fouad Ajami, *The Syrian Rebellion* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2012), 192. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton succinctly articulated this reticence when she asked "[a]re we supporting Al Qaeda in Syria? Are we supporting Hamas in Syria?" One of Ajami's chief criticisms of U.S. policy in Syria was that the fear of radicalization prevented U.S. action early in the rebellion when radicalization of the opposition was actually less likely.

[32]Examples of this reticence are not difficult to find, but the example of Bahrain is illuminating. Despite very little evidence, the U.S. and most NATO allies remained on the sidelines, and even commended the Bahraini government for its openness to change, as the Bahraini regime and their Saudi backers harshly repressed the 2011 pro-Democracy movement led by the nation's majority Shi'ite population. The reasons for the U.S. reluctance in supporting democratic reform involved fear of Iranian influence among Bahraini Shi'i, a longstanding strategic partnership that allows the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet to have its headquarters there, and the United States' relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As Adam Hanieh wrote, "the unwavering support extended to the Bahraini regime by the United States, Britain, and the other Gulf Arab states confirmed the centrality of Bahrain to the nature of imperial power in the Middle East." Adam Hanieh, "Bahrain," in *Dispatches from the Arab Spring: Understanding the New Middle East*, eds. P. Amar and V. Prashad (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 63–88. The specific quote above is found on pages 83 and 84.

[33]Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam*, 119. See also, Stephen Brooke and Shadi Hamid, "Promoting Democracy to Stop Terror, Revisited," *Policy Review* (February 1, 2010), http://www.hoover.org/research/promoting-democracy-stop-terror-revisited.

[34]Stephen Brooke and Shadi Hamid, "Promoting Democracy to Stop Terror, Revisited."

[35]Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John Esposito, eds., *Islam, Gender, and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), ix.

36Moghadam, *Modernizing Women*, 7.

37Bernard Lewis and Buntzie Churchill, *Islam: The Religion and the People* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing, 2009), 112. Without delving too far into the argument over Islam's religious texts and their interpretation, as there are, by some interpretations, around one hundred passages in the *Qur'an* alone that related to the role of women in the family. See Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Islam and Gender: Dilemmas in the Changing Arab World," in *Islam Gender and Social Change*, eds. Y. Y. Haddad and J. L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 12.

38Moghadam, *Modernizing Women*, 5.

39A couple of caveats are important regarding Islamic law and women, and here is as good of a place as any. For most of Islam's history the protections provided for women, including the laws of inheritance, gave more rights to women than western societies where daughters were often completely left out of a family's inheritance. Among other rights not found in most western societies until the last two hundred years or so, Muslim women were guaranteed the right to conduct business, to maintain property, to maintain property after they married, to keep their names, and to receive at least a rudimentary education. See Haddad, "Islam and Gender: Dilemmas in the Changing Arab World," 7.

40Interview with Dalia Ziada, "Dalia Ziada on Egypt's Women Under Morsi: 'Now We Will Be Challenging God,'" *Gender Concerns International*, http://www.genderconcerns.org/article.php?id_nr=3306&id=Dalia+Ziada+on+Egypt's+women+under+Morsi percent3A+"Now+we+will+be+challenging+God".

41Haddad, "Islam and Gender," 7.

42Khaled Abu el-Fadl, *The Great Theft*, 263–74. The key piece here is that justice, in the modern world, involves equality.

43Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 64–6.

44Ann Elizabeth Mayer, "Internationalizing the Conversation on Women's Rights: Arab Countries Face the CEDAW Committee," in *Islamic Law and the Challenge of Modernity*, 152.

45Haddad, "Islam and Gender," 7.

46Ibid., 19–20. This is the discussion of the public and private dichotomy, but it does lead to relegating women to the home and not into the public sphere.

47Madawi al-Rasheed, "Can You Be an Islamist and a Feminist," *Al-Monitor* (March 12, 2015), http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/islamist-feminists-muslim-world.html#.

48Ibid.

49Moghadam, *Modernizing Women*, 7. The issue of free will is noted here by Moghadam. Is it true equality when one does not have the option of partaking in any path they so choose?

50Haddad, "Islam and Gender," 22.

51Moghadam, *Modernizing Women*, 10.

52Although the AKP is Islamist, Turkey's regime and constitution protect secularism. It is a Muslim majority state, but not necessarily one run with Sharia law. Depending on the type of regime in power and the interpretation of Islam's role (if any) in government, women's rights can be protected. I am not sure that we can generalize, but Turkey does stand as a case where an Islamist government retains a secular regime. Turkey is an exceptional case having instilled both a secular and democratic regime for decades. It is difficult to find another case in the region that is like Turkey.

53Agence France-presse, "Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: 'Women are Not Equal to Men,'" *The Guardian* (November 24, 2014), http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/24/turkeys-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-women-not-equal-men.

[54]Simon Tisdall, "Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Turkey's elected Sultan or an Islamic Democrat?" *The Guardian* (October 24, 2012), http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/24/recep-tayyip-erdogan-turkey. By the numbers, it is clear that there is still robust opposition to the AKP. In the 2015 Parliamentary elections, the AKP won just under 41 percent of votes cast. The two primary secular opposition parties, the Republican Peoples Party and Peoples Democratic Party received a combined 38 percent of votes cast. Therefore, while fractured, it seems clear that there are still robust secular values in Turkey. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Report, "Republic Of Turkey Parliamentary Elections, 7 June 2015: Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report," http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/177926?download=true.

[55]Tisdall, "Recep Tayyip Erdogan." According to the opposition officials interviewed by Tisdall there is a fear that Erdoğan, through the intimidation of the press and other strong-handed tactics, is trying to change the constitution to give the President more power. The concern is that he would then use that power to "overturn Turkey's secular tradition and create an Islamist state." Their fear is not unfounded, as Erdoğan stated in June of 2014 that the goals of his education reforms were to create a new "pious generation" in Turkey. Also see Orhan Kemal Cengiz, "Erdogan Reforms Meant to Educate 'Pious Generation,'" *Al-Monitor* (June 26, 2014), trans. Sibel Utku Bila, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/cengiz-produce-religious-generations-erdogan-akp-islamist.html#.

[56]Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Report, "Republic of Turkey Parliamentary Elections."

[57]John Henley, Kareem Shaheen, and Constanze Letsch, "Turkey Election: Erdoğan and AKP Return to Power with Outright Majority," *The Guardian* (November 2, 2015), http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/01/turkish-election-akp-set-for-majority-with-90–of-vote-counted.

[58]Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity*, 383.

[59]Gihan Ibrahim, "Interview with John Stewart, April 25, 2011," http://thedailyshow.cc.com/videos/e279jz/gigi-ibrahim.

[60]Marwan Muashaer, *The Second Arab Awakening and the Battle for Pluralism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 51.

[61]U.S. Department of State, "Remarks with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr, July 14, 2012, by Hillary R. Clinton," (Cairo, Egypt, 2012), http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2012/07/195027.htm.

[62]Daniel J. Gilman, *Cairo Pop: Youth Music in Contemporary Egypt* (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 206.

[63]Ibid., 205. It is also true that Morsi had directly threatened the political, economic, and class privileges the military had cultivated over the previous half century after the Free Officer's coup of 1952. So while protection of liberalism was a stated goal of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), they clearly acted in their own self-interest as well.

[64]Michael Birnbaum, "Egypt's President Morsi Takes Sweeping New Powers," *The Washington Post* (November 22, 2012), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/egypts-president-morsi-takes-sweeping-new-powers/2012/11/22/8d87d716–34cb-11e2–92f0–496af208bf23_story.html.

[65]Masoud Kazemzadeh, *Islamic Fundamentalism, Feminism, and Gender Inequality in Iran Under Khomeini* (New York: University Press of America, 2002), 1.

[66]United Nations Development Program, *Tunisia's Constitution of 2014*, trans. the UNDP, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Tunisia_2014.pdf, 14.

[67]Tom Malinowski, "The New Tunisian Model of Governance," September 2, 2015, http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rm/2015/246584.htm.

[68]A brief perusal of headlines highlights the concern among some observers. Just two of the more alarmist editorial headlines in the immediate aftermath of the election highlight the trend. *Huffington Post* journalist Sinnan Ciddi labeled the election "The End of Turkey's Experiment with Democracy," and Michael Rubin wrote in *Newsweek's* online editorial section that "[Erdoğan] seeks to change the constitution to confirm his position as sultan-in-chief," and that "[t]he chief victims of Erdogan's strengthened rule will be women." Sinnan Ciddi, "The End of Turkey's Experiment with Democracy," *The Huffington Post* (November 16, 2015), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sinan-ciddi/the-end-of-turkeys-experiment-with-democracy_b_8575748.html; and Michael Rubin, "Election Results Have Dire Consequences for Turkey," *Newsweek* (November 3, 2015), http://www.newsweek.com/election-results-have-dire-consequences-turkey-390111.

[69]Pinar Tremblay, "Women Were Big Losers in Turkey's Elections," *Al-Monitor* (November 23, 2015), http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/11/turkey-women-are-losers-turkish-elections-akp.html#.

[70]Democracy International, *Egypt Presidential Election Observation Report* (Bethesda, MD: Democracy International, 2014), http://democracyinternational.com/sites/default/files/Egypt percent20Presidential percent20Election percent20Observation percent20Report percent20(ES) percent20– percent20for percent20web.pdf.

[71]Joe Stork, "Egypt's Political Prisoners," *Open Democracy* (March 6, 2015), https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/06/egypts-political-prisoners.

[72]U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Aid to Egypt," April 24, 2014, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/04/225147.htm. To be fair, the United States did briefly suspend aid after the 2013 coup that ousted President Morsi.

[73]Egyptian State Information Services, "Constitution of The Arab Republic of Egypt 2014, Unofficial Translation," http://www.sis.gov.eg/Newvr/Dustor-en001.pdf; Barack Obama, "Remarks By President Obama on a New Beginning," in *The New Arab Revolt, What Happened, What it Means, and What Comes Next* (New York: Council On Foreign Relations, 2011), 395–6.

[74]Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State*, 147.

[75]Interview with Dalia Ziada, "Dalia Ziada on Egypt's Women under Morsi.'"